

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS TO GILLNET VESSEL OWNERS

For the 2004 fishing year, new gillnet tags must be purchased by all Northeast (NE) multispecies and monkfish vessels fishing with gillnet gear under the days-at-sea (DAS) program. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) is required to solicit vendors to manufacture and distribute gillnet tags every five years. NOAA Fisheries has decided to remain with the current gillnet tag vendor, the National Band and Tag Company, to provide gillnet tags for the next three years (through the 2007 fishing year). These new tags will not be available until after May 1, 2004.

Effective August 1, 2004, a new gillnet tag series (blue in color) replaces the currently valid teal green gillnet tag series that have been in use since 2000. For the 2004 fishing year, the new blue gillnet tags must be purchased by all limited access multispecies and monkfish vessels fishing with gillnet gear under the days-at-sea (DAS) program.

Until new tags become available, the following rules will apply:

- The current teal green teardrop-shaped gillnet tags will remain valid through July 31, 2004.
- **Limited access multispecies and monkfish vessels must continue to tag their gillnet gear, consistent with the regulations, using the current teal-green teardrop-shaped tags until the new blue gillnet tags become available or unless otherwise authorized through the issuance of a Letter of Authorization (LOA) as specified below.** Once available, vessels may begin fishing with the blue gillnet tags.
- **Vessels issued a NE multispecies permit and intending to fish under a NE multispecies days-at-sea (DAS) with gillnet gear must still obtain an annual designation as either a Day or Trip gillnet vessel prior to fishing with gillnet gear in the 2004 fishing year.**

Letter of Authorization (LOA):

Vessels that do not currently possess valid gillnet tags and that intend on fishing with gillnet gear under a DAS prior to August 1, 2004, may receive a LOA exempting these vessels from the gillnet tag requirements until such time as the new BLUE gillnet tags become available. These vessels may fish for groundfish or monkfish without the use of gillnet tags, provided the vessel complies with the conditions specified in the LOA. This LOA must be retained on board the vessel during the period of exemption. These vessels are still required to purchase new BLUE gillnet tags using the enclosed order form.

Gillnet Tag Certificate and Annual Category Designations: Day or Trip gillnet category declarations are to be made on a form provided by NOAA Fisheries and signed by the vessel owner or authorized representative. A vessel must remain in that category for the entire fishing year. Once a declaration form has been received, NOAA Fisheries will send a letter to the vessel owner that serves as written confirmation from the Regional Administrator that the vessel is a Day or Trip gillnet vessel. This confirmation letter must be retained on board the vessel when fishing under a NE multispecies DAS with gillnet gear.

Once a vessel owner orders new blue gillnet tags, a revised gillnet tag certificate and category designation form will be issued. This certificate supercedes all previously issued gillnet tag certificates.

Ordering New Blue Gillnet Tags:

Vessel owners required to use gillnet tags must indicate the number of gillnet tags that are being requested on the revised tag order form included with this package. **The new blue gillnet tags cost \$1.20 per tag and will remain valid for at least three years (i.e., through April 30, 2007).**